

The Progressive Review

Nbr 301 November 1991

Unexamined politics: life among the liberal fundamentalists

About a half dozen years ago, I started hanging out with traditional liberals again. It wasn't that my views had changed, but I had become fascinated with a conundrum of left-of-center politics.

The old liberals, and their natural allies such as the large labor unions, had the power, visibility and ground troops, but were stunningly devoid of ideas. Myriad other progressive groups, meanwhile, were churning out exciting visions and policies, but with few missionaries to spread them, they were quickly lost in the media miasma.

American politics had developed an odd sort of time-warp. The right, of course, played its traditional role as defender of the past. But it was joined by liberals who were doing the same thing, only for a different past.

If the conservatives were opposed to the future, the liberals were just as much afraid of it. The future, meanwhile, happily continued on its way, ever increasing the gap between itself and what liberals and conservatives were talking about.

This problem has much to do with the current state of American politics. The fictional past the right wants to create is simply more appealing to many people than that of the liberals. The reasons for this are several, among them the innate attraction of a world made safe for selfishness. But there is also the fact that much of America has lived long enough only to have experienced the failures of liberalism, but neither the triumphs of the New Deal, Fair Deal and Great Society nor the Great Depression and its precursors.

This alone is enough reason for liberals to develop a new shtick. How you going to get them back to the farm when all they've ever seen is Carter, Mondale and Dukakis?

But liberals have been extraordinarily resistant to change. In a cultural sense, they have become more conservative and less adaptable than the right or the libertarians. They react to neither the new concerns and interests of their natural constituency nor to the new tactics of their opponents. They are still fighting Hubert Humphrey's war against Robert Taft.

This is hardly in the tradition of Roosevelt, Truman and Johnson, whose administrations were marked by constant innovation and adaptation. Johnson -- who got more good domestic legislation passed in less time than any other American president -- had phenomenal adaptability. He began one year, 1965, telling civil rights leaders it was too soon for another civil rights bill, and ended that same year with the hallmark voting rights legislation.

While scattered liberal lawmakers today push worthy new policies -- Ted Weiss's economic

conversion efforts and the belated liberal interest in national health insurance come to mind -- for the most part liberal solutions are characterized by their dreary familiarity.

Today's liberals seem to lack a sense of politics as war, in which one constantly rearranges the order of battle to win one's ultimate objective. They see politics more as a secular form of religion in which success is judged not by societal change but by the rigor with which the faith is maintained. They are political fundamentalists and, like religious fundamentalists, as far removed from their liberal heritage as Pat Robertson is from Jesus.

As with the religious fundamentalists, the liberal true believers often miss the point. The canon becomes particularized and heavily a matter of style and form. They know how to speak like liberals to other liberals but not how to talk to the rest of the world.

The result is a strange distortion of liberal priorities. Gut issues of immense potential popularity such as health, housing, job creation and education are left by the wayside in favor of issues that, no matter how worthy they may be, are most likely to alienate liberalism from the largest number of Americans. From the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit to abortion, from gun control to affirmative action, contemporary liberals have developed a fetish for issues that annoy people.

Consider abortion for instance. There is no doubt that abortion is an important matter, but how did it become the most important women's issue? Why, for example,

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is so much liberal attention directed to the abortion question and so little to pay equity or prenatal and infant health care?

Part of the answer is that premature babies can't march in rallies and another part is that their parents are often too poor to take time off to demonstrate. Those American women whose first priority is food, health care or safe working conditions, are pushed to the back of the liberal line.

These issues do not have to be mutually exclusive, yet in practice they have tended to become so. This is unfortunate, for a strategy that elevates freedom of choice to the exclusion of other aspects of women's second class status seems to aid neither freedom of choice nor that status. If the battle for choice was fought within the context of women's other political, economic and social problems, the abortion issue might become far less of a lightning rod to the right. At the very least the response of some might change from "I'm against the women's movement because I'm against abortion" to "I agree with the women's movement except for abortion." In politics that's a big difference.

A similar phenomenon has occurred in civil rights. When was the decision made that affirmative action was the *sine qua non* of civil rights? I don't recall that debate. As with so many aspects of the current liberal canon, it just happened.

In its first decade or so affirmative action worked very well, what with bi-partisan support and only tolerable controversy. But black student enrollment in college, as a percentage of all students, peaked in 1977 and thereafter started to decline.

There are several things to note about this. First, affirmative action, at colleges at least, apparently stopped working. Secondly, the decline began under the same laws that spurred affirmative action's growth. Thirdly, this change appears to have commenced even before the Reagan administration.

Of course, when Reagan came in and began a systematic assault on civil rights, affirmative action took repeated additional beatings. And the real blow was Reagan economics. Affirmative action, which had done so well in an

expanding economy, became a dramatically new issue (and one easy to demagogue) when it was played out in a contracting job market.

But by this time, affirmative action had become, to many liberals, not merely another tactic in the civil rights struggle (or a temporary expedient as LBJ saw it) but a basic right. Thus the liberal's duty was not only to defend this right but to expand it. That the changing economic circumstances and empirical factors might suggest changing tactics, that the very success of affirmative action would almost inevitably lead to questions of specific fairness, did not occur to the liberal leadership.

Of course, it is argued, as with abortion, that it was not liberals who made affirmative action an issue. But the evidence suggests that liberals and civil rights activists were just as happy as the rightwing to use affirmative action as a major battleground. At the very least it saved the trouble of coming up with a new approach.

Rather than altering the focus of the civil rights struggle -- while holding on to affirmative action gains already made --- the liberals cheerfully played the right's game: affirmative action *became* civil rights just as abortion *became* feminism.

And what has happened -- if not as a result, then at least more than coincidentally? Incredible success by the right, defeats by minorities, the most reactionary Supreme Court in half a century, and a stunning loss of moral direction by the civil rights movement that culminated in this year's civil rights bill, legislation well described in the June 24 *Nation*:

This year, the keepers of the civil rights cause could come up with no slogan catchier than "The burden of proof in antidiscrimination lawsuits should be on the employer!" It probably appealed to lawyers (273 members of Congress, most of them with some legal education, voted for the proposition) but it did not start a prairie fire of enthusiasm in the country. And it is there at the grass roots that a civil rights movement must grow to change policy in Washington...

Democratic leaders... had no political foundation for their civil rights bill. They gave members no programs for economic development, for instance, to serve and

mollify anxious constituents worried about minority affirmative action. . . Civil rights this year ended up as an argument between potential electoral candidates about lawsuits. It's been a long slide since the brave days.

The problem with pushing affirmative action during a tight job market was simply that the issue had become one of competing equities. One could not make the argument for it without implicitly appearing to say it is all right for some white males not to get jobs.

A similar tension of competing equities surrounded school bussing: integration of schools vs. maintenance of neighborhood. Here again, liberals and civil rights activists wanted to speak only of one equity and refused to give even token recognition to parents' well-founded attachment to their neighborhoods and community schools.

Opposition, they felt, could come from only one source: racism. The dilemma was never given credence and intense bitterness developed without, it now appears, compensatory results.

In one striking exception to the national school bussing furor, DC civil rights leader Julius Hobson -- a statistician by trade and a Marxist by inclination -- sued the local school system in the sixties not on the basis of race but on the basis of economic inequity. The result was a court ruling ordering equal per-student spending among the city's schools, a law that stands to this day. Bussing never became an issue, except for a voluntary city-suburb bussing program that was cancelled by the majority black DC school board as degrading. Now, over 20 years later, equal-spending is seen as fair and non-controversial while bussing programs are still in the courts.

When I mentioned my reservations about the emphasis given abortion and affirmative action the other day to a national activist, prominent in both civil rights and women's issues, she nodded and said, "The problem is that they are not healing issues." Here was the crux: such issues have a high potential to divide and exacerbate, and create a fertile field for the

demagogue. And, just as important, their emphasis has not been politically successful.

If affirmative action and pro-choice were the only arrows in the liberal quiver, their priority might be understandable, but consider just a few of the issues that have gotten short shrift at the same time:

- » The de facto segregation of Congress.

- » Housing segregation that has still left 30% of black Americans living in almost complete racial isolation.

- » America's massive failure in pre-natal and infant care.

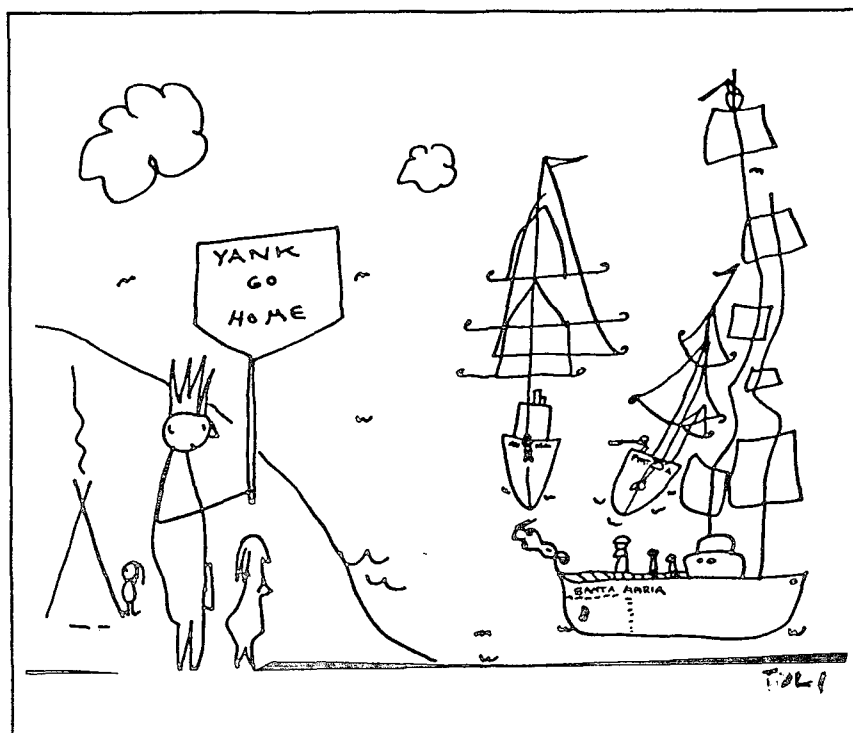
- » Pay equity issues for women.

- » Working conditions for both women and minorities. Where is affirmative action on sweat shops and in the farm fields?

- » The substantial anti-minority and anti-women effects of zoning and city planning.

- » A mass of federal and local laws that create unreasonable barriers to minorities and women starting new businesses or running them at reasonable cost.

- » De facto transportation segregation at both the national and local level. Nationally, air transportation is favored while rail and bus transit are allowed to languish. Locally, mass transit is tilted towards the needs of white suburbanites and is a major although



consistently ignored factor in the hardening of urban ghettos.

Some of these issues lack pizzazz, some are extremely complex, but in such issues will be found real solutions, healing solutions, to the nation's problems of discrimination and inequity.

For example, is it possible to envision an America functioning with ethnic decency, while still accepting the isolation that zoning, real estate practices and transportation promote?

Is it possible to create a fair and equitable society and leave untouched the traditional urban structure that was designed for men to go to work and women to stay home?

What good will affirmative action do for the center city black or hispanic who has no way of getting to the job in the first place?

Is abortion our best answer to the poor woman who can't afford to raise a child?

Is freedom of choice really more important than freedom from disease, injury, death in the workplace?

Of course, the abortion and affirmative action issues won't just go away just because the liberal vision is broadened. But even within the sphere of such matters there is much thinking to be done.

For example, liberals could



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listen more to people's fears and attempt in their policies to ameliorate them, separating demagogic criticism from reasonable doubts.

As it stands, the unspoken assumption is that those who oppose policies like affirmative action are racists. And even when it's not assumed, it is often what is felt by those not in the liberal camp.

If liberals listened, they might find ways to recast affirmative action so that "the sons of Jamaican physicians or wealthy Cuban businessmen" (to quote one critic) did not get a free ride out of it. They might hear the inner monologue of much of the criticism -- help those who actually need help but not because of some genetic factor such as race or sex. They might be more sympathetic to the pressures felt by lower-class white Americans. They might note that nearly every successful social program in this country has been applied either universally, as with social security, or based on real economic status, such as Head Start. These are the

programs that Americans support, even when -- as in the case of Head start -- over two-thirds of the beneficiaries are minorities.

Yes, there is paranoia about affirmative action; yes, there is exaggeration based on anecdotal evidence; and, yes, people ascribe the wrong causes to their social and economic suffering. But the fear, hyperbole and faulty understanding can not be erased -- nor the cause they hinder advanced -- by treating them as some sort of silly psychosomatic illness that is best ignored or impugned as just short of a hate crime. The fears may be wrong-headed, but they are just as real as if they were based on fact.

If liberals were listening, they might inject some economic criteria into affirmative action. They might couple their pro-choice efforts coupled with equally strong demands for decent child care and improved working conditions for women. And lesser issues -- gun control, speed limits and so forth -- might be put on hold or downplayed. There are, in fact, far more options than most

liberal leaders realize.

It is true that in an ideal world national gun control would be accepted as common sense. It is also true that what the Second Amendment really means is that people can carry arms provided they are in a "well organized militia," e.g. the National Guard.

But with everything else on our plate, why fight this battle now? In fact, issues such as gun control could effectively be used as bargaining chips in more important struggles such as minority and women's rights, but not so long as liberals refuse to set political priorities. Just as the Catholic church distinguishes between venial and mortal sins, liberals need to know the difference between venial and mortal virtues.

Not only does the current liberal establishment skew its priorities, it actively avoids the sort of issues that once made liberalism a powerful force.

The most dramatic example is national health insurance. Even the American public is ahead of the liberals on this one. There are national politicians willing to push it (or "a single payer system" as they gingerly prefer to call it) -- including to varying degrees, Senators Bob Kerrey and Wellstone. But to date they have gotten little prodding from traditional liberal activists, the drive coming from health-oriented progressives of a more grass roots variety.

Similarly, the liberal establishment has been consistently AWOL in the War on Drugs. The most mean-spirited, corrupt, unconstitutional, anti-minority, dangerous and stupid domestic policy of recent times has been broadly condoned if not actively supported by this establishment. The liberal participation in this war has been at best a display of gross cowardice and at worst borders on ideological treason.

The liberal establishment has cooperated with, winked at or hidden from, repeated assaults of the Reagan and Bush administration on the Constitution and democratic principles.

The liberal establishment has shown virtually no interest in the decentralization of power, it has encouraged the excessive litigiousness of America, it has spawned and protected the infamous system of PACs, it has ignored the reasonable concerns of small business, it has been indifferent to government waste and corruption (most dramatically in the Congress which it controls), and it has shied away from reforms in the democratic process.

In short it has betrayed its own visionary, vigorous and pragmatic past, turning instead into a timid, shadow of itself, a political tableau rather than a political force. In many ways it has been the best friend Reagan and Bush ever had.

There is still much vigor to true liberalism. Its essence, the practical and humane solution of real problems, is still practiced in many places. But as you move up the ladder of liberal power, the voices become more cautious, the ritual more routine, the rules more prescribed. And as this happens, the

critical thinking that is at the center of liberalism at its best, gets replaced with a catechism. You find yourself no longer in politics making things happen, but in a sanctimonious church where nothing does. -- Sam Smith

The greening of South Africa

Nelson Mandela

From a speech by Nelson Mandela:

The lesson apartheid South Africa has yet to learn, hopefully before we have a major catastrophe, is that noxious fumes, the destruction of natural resources, nuclear emissions and pollution of water do not respect racial boundaries. The clouds of smoke affect black people in the townships first, but they also drift into the white suburbs. The uncontrolled storage of toxic waste will affect the air we breathe and the water we drink, regardless of which racial group we belong to. Traditionally our people lived in harmony with and respected their habitat. Traditional customs and taboos protected the environment and the concept of sustainable development was implicit in our practices. Our ancestors knew that the preservation of the fertility of the land and the non-destructive uses of resources was necessary for survival. This is the environmental ethic we have to rediscover and promote.

The well-being of all the people of South Africa is going to depend in large measure on how we manage our environment. Economic growth, however rapid, will not suffice, unless that development is sustainable and our resources are conserved for future generations.

For the majority of South Africans, the major environmental issues are: availability of land, so that it does not have to be stripped bare in order to provide food and fuel; providing adequate sanitation

and clean non-toxic water for irrigation and for the health of our people; ensuring that the air we breathe is free of pollution. These issues cannot be resolved without the participation of those most concerned.

The African National Congress sees the preservation and the rehabilitation of the environment as part of our liberation struggle. This is why what are called third generation rights -- or more popularly, green rights -- are included in our proposed Bill of Rights.

Like all other human rights they are inalienable.

Hold the McEurope, please

Thomas S. Martin

"Europe 1992," the approaching new phase of the Single European Act, is viewed by its architects not only as an end in itself but as the crucial step toward a politically unified Europe. This new Europe -- capitalist, social-democratic, peaceful -- has been proffered as the logical conclusion of fifteen centuries of European history.

Sounds rather grand, doesn't it, if not historically terminal? Indeed, some fundamentalist preachers have seen the apocalyptic ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 in the unified Europe. But not to worry -- as I wrote here three years ago -- it isn't going to happen.

The act, formulated in 1986 and quickly accepted by the governments of all twelve European Community members, calls for the end of all trade and customs barriers at the end of this year. EC92, as the European press calls it, creates the world's largest financial and trade entity.

Only the economies of the

United States and Japan will rival it, and the populations of both will be dwarfed by the Community's 325 million people (read: consumers). Undoubtedly EC92 will go into effect, but it will not produce the desired results.

In many respects European unity is a noble dream -- it could end centuries of internecine war and oppression, perhaps rescue the cradle of western civilization from its long decline. But the power brokers of the European Community, like George Bush, are looking for clout and profit -- not a genuinely new world order. They fail to understand that the European in the street does not share their visceral fear of competition from Japan or the US. Their agenda is only thinly disguised and may be easily discovered by reading any of their agreements or listening to their public discourse.

EC92 is designed to benefit the ruling classes, the multinational corporations and the bankers. Those benefits are to be achieved by a bigger and slicker mechanism for the exploitation of practically everyone in Europe. Fortunately, however, the Eurocrats have left a few factors out of their calculations. The resulting defects in the equation will not prevent unity, but they will produce something quite different from the intended outcome.

What are these factors? First and foremost is re nascent nationalism.

Devolutionary movements are quite active in Spain and lurk just below the surface in Britain, Belgium, and perhaps France and Ireland. They will grow as the Eurocrats try to homogenize the continent. Separatism frightens the multinationals and their political flunkies, which is why the EC has striven so desperately in the past six months to prevent the breakup of Yugoslavia. It is no coincidence that Prime Minister Gonzalez of Spain made a stronger appeal to "save" Yugoslavia than any other EC statesman, nor that Catalan separatists are on a first-name basis with the Slovenian leadership. Ethnic nationalism is a complex phenomenon: it can be catalyzed by the most noble motives (the Baltics), or the most evil (Nazi Germany), or even by apparently ludicrous scuffles.

In today's Europe, the scuffles are most prevalent, but nonetheless powerful. The European Commission's greatest headache over the past decade has been the endless arguments over the standardization of products and services. Its 286 "directives" opened up a Pandora's box, out of which jumped everything from marmalade to electrical outlets to the kitchen sink. In the 1979 Cassis de Dijon case the European Court of Justice tried to dispose of the problem, but it hasn't gone away. The Germans want no interference with their centuries-old brewing processes; the British want to continue requiring a rabies quarantine; and so on. This is only the tip of the iceberg: many such complaints are not amenable to legislation at the EC level. Kentish villagers are angry when mammoth Italian lorries barrel down their country lanes; Berliners don't want to see burgeoning Greek and Portuguese ghettos.

To the world business

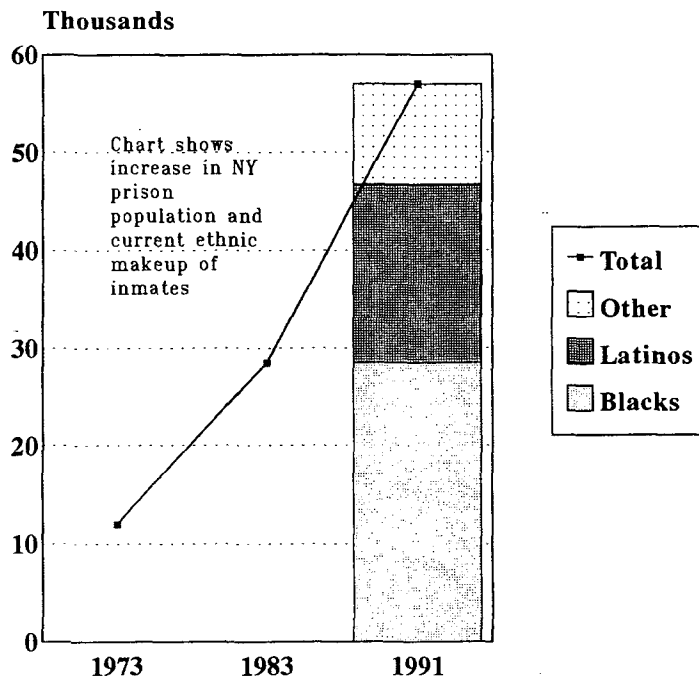
community these disputes are merely exasperating. But they are symptomatic of a deeper malaise: the Europeans simply are not going to let themselves be McEuropeanized so that the corporations can make more money more easily.

They understand quite well just who is being asked to sacrifice what, and for whom. A second factor, all but written off, is organized labor. During most of this century European workers were supported by, and voted for, powerful socialist labor parties.

They elected many prime ministers and presidents and still control some legislatures. But these "socialist" leaders, especially François Mitterand, have sold their constituents down the river in exchange for the ability to compete in the global marketplace. As in this country, union membership declined during the greedy Eighties, overwhelmed by the fiscal and corporate scramble for advantage as the borders crumbled. Beginning

Minorities in Prison

The New York Story



Source: Correctional Assn of NY

with Fiat in 1980, major unions all over Europe were brutally busted during the decade. The unions have almost no Europe-wide organization, and indeed seem to have expended all their remaining energy in support of the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights. This document, a classic liberal sop to the left, promises that basic social welfare programs and aid to the poorer regions will be maintained after 1992. Little effort has been made to oppose the pro-capitalist European Company Law which is now in process of creation.

These regulations could lead to nothing less than the dismantling of Europe's social welfare structure in favor of a laissez-faire market that Adam Smith would have loved. The Cecchini Report, crafted for the Commission in 1987 to bolster the case for EC92, admits that unemployment will rise in a unified market, and that growth can be expected only in certain high-tech and service industries. Critics say it will be far worse than that. By all accounts the forecast for traditional organized labor is not bright -- it is parochially unprepared for the realities of a trans-national Europe. However, there is some room for hope. By joining forces with nationalists and separatists, the unions could rebuild political clout in many regions as they rediscover their national identities.

And the continuing degradation of the environment will be a rallying point. If one thing is clear from the European Commission's directives, and from the happy burling of the new spate of books on how to make a bundle out of EC92, it is that the capitalists and Eurocrats do not understand their own constituency. Significantly, the American books are full of minor historical and linguistic errors, and even English misspellings -- what does that tell us about the narrowness of their vision, about the blind leap of faith they are about to take? It reminds one of the staggering irrationality of the Nazis -- but then all they, too, wanted was to make a killing.

The European Community has not reacted efficiently to political challenges like the Iraqi crisis or to the revolutions of 1989 and 1991 in the former Soviet bloc. It has also fumbled the Uruguay Round of GATT talks. However, its economic

policies were crucial to the downfall of state socialism in Eastern Europe, and perhaps primarily responsible for the destruction of COMECON. A vast new field for capitalist investment and development thus opened up, and the transnational corporations did not hesitate to jump in. Indeed, they had already made inroads; Pizza Hut was in Moscow before the Berlin Wall came down, and General Electric was moving in on Hungary's electrical industry. This does not mean, of course, that the eastern European states can hope for admission to the Community any time soon. Quite the contrary. The cargo-cult rush toward consumerism will burn itself out once the easterners understand the social price they will have to pay, and the Eurocrats know this. That is why they are in such a hurry to make a Eurobuck there.

McEuropean prosperity depends on a lack of any meaningful ultra-left opposition. But anarchists, socialists and small-c communists still thrive in the east, and are likely to play a major role in its post-Stalinist societies. Environmental problems are much worse there, and expectations of social services are higher: the Czechs and Poles will never settle for the pious reassurances of the European Charter.

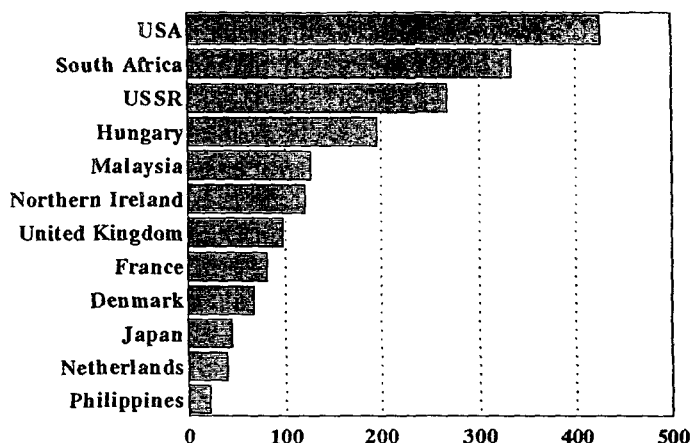
More important, the eastern

states can be economically colonized more easily from outside than as equal European partners.

The purpose behind a single European currency is more difficult to sort out, but potentially more telling. The need for some kind of "Eurodollar" has been orthodox EC dogma from the outset. It has passed through a number of confusing restructurings, but its present form is embodied in the European Monetary Union treaty.

The international exchange unit created by EMU, a forerunner of the true "Eurodollar," is the European Currency Unit, charmingly abbreviated *ÉCU* (the *cu*, "shield," was a medieval French coin). It is a basket of the twelve national currencies, balanced in a complex ratio based on the size of each country's economy and its currency exchange rate. The *ÉCU* was patently designed to maximize trade and profits, not for everyday use by actual people. It is already widely traded by banks and in the bond market, and on the international exchanges. Its use by corporate capitalism has already accelerated the flow of cash out of the poorer Mediterranean countries. Some of the money will be returned, after the capitalists take their cut: the Delors Committee Report of 1989, after congratulating itself on the success of the *ÉCU*, called for doubling

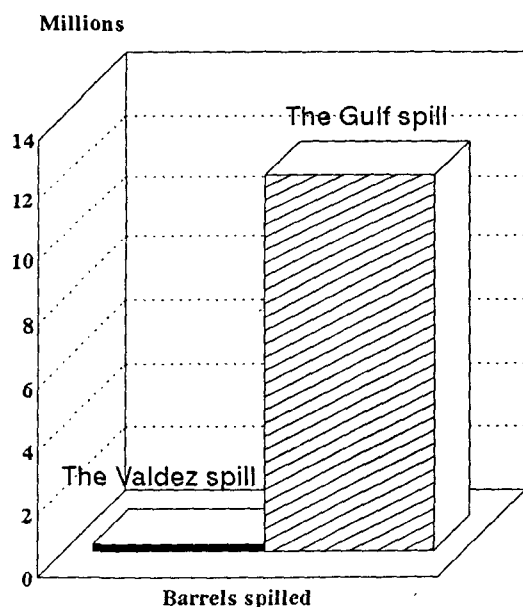
Prisoners per 100,000 population



Source: Penal Reform International

Comparing the Gulfs

The Valdez and Persian Gulf oil spills



structural funds "in order to enhance the ability of Community policies to promote regional development and to correct economic imbalances." Of course, when the Eurodollar drives out the national currencies, there will be one less obstacle for the separatists to overcome. More ominous, however, is the sort of financial austerity that must be enforced to make the ECU a stable currency competitive with the dollar and the yen. The Arab example has shown how profitable money markets can be -- for the capitalist elite. The necessary lower interest rates and higher productivity and profits will be possible only if Europe, like many African and Latin American countries, cuts social services to the bone. Will the average European sit still for policies like those the IMF has forced on Peru? Eventually the Commission plans to establish a central European bank, rather like Alexander Hamilton's Bank of the United States.

As McEurope flourishes, signs of popular discontent with its political dimension will come to the fore. Some have been evident for a decade. The Community has made

an effort to increase cooperation and information sharing among the police agencies of its members, a development which rightly worries many ordinary people. And as ecological decay worsens it has become painfully clear to nearly everyone that Eurobusiness and technology-for-profit are the cause, not the cure. Accordingly they have flocked into anti-capitalist parties and movements, notably the Greens (not to be confused with the several Green parties, which have been largely co-opted). At The Other Economic Summit last summer, Green advocates offered an array of alternatives to the EC directives, including local autonomy, a strong "monopolies and mergers commission," sustainable development, and nonpolluting energy and transport policies. In Germany and the Netherlands, especially, disaffected youth are taking over crumbling inner cities and governing neighborhoods through direct participatory democracy. Anarchists and non-Communist socialists are on the rise. (So too, unfortunately, are neo-fascists.) The American media have

so far successfully concealed the rise of similar anti-authoritarian movements in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Many such groups, inside and outside the Community, are allied with separatist movements. Many put forth a radical analysis of the ecological crisis, one which has never been able to find a voice in our mainstream press. It may be too soon, and too Foucaultian, to call these movements "post-ideological." But in the long run the future of Europe belongs to them.

In the coming decade a multi-layered, interlocking Europe will evolve, with the European Community as only one of its components. By the turn of the century the political structure of Europe will resemble a set of overlapping Venn diagrams -- arranged horizontally, not in the vertical hierarchy planned by the Eurocrats. The process is well under way. Italy, an EC member, is also part of the Pentagonale, a regional development organization including Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Poland will soon join, making it the Hexagonale. Some special arrangement will have to be made with Croatia and Slovenia if their independence moves succeed. The Pentagonale largely overlaps the Alpen-Adria league which -- significantly -- includes parts, but not all, of Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. At an even more local level, the twin cities of Gorizia and Nova Gorica (on the Italian-Slovenian frontier) recently concluded an agreement to combine many city services and to co-ordinate educational and cultural programs -- all without consulting their respective "sovereign" governments. Austria, probably to join the EC in 1993, has recently created the *Donauländer*, a consortium of nations and provinces bordering on the Danube. The Visegrad group (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary) may partially replace the defunct COMECON.

Other such alliances are in the works, a process which will be accelerated by the breakup of the Soviet Union. In 1991 the

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) made its debut on the world stage, and though it is currently more concerned with third-world issues, many European separatists will join it. Sovereignty as we have long known it is dead, and it will not be redefined in favor of the Eurocrats. Clearly the people of Europe, although they do want EC92, are not about to let it take over their lives. They will allow it a limited role at the transnational level, where vast economies of scale make sense; but they will not allow it to become a centralized United States of Europe.

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The Weather Report

The Yale connection

As close as we can figure it out, the Thomas affair evolved like this: a Yale president nominated a Yale to be on the Supreme Court. This Yale was accused of sexual harassment by a Yale professor, whose story was backed by a Yale judge and a Yale corporate attorney. The Yale's story, however, was attacked by a Yale businessman, John Doggett, who ended up being accused of sexual harassment himself and a Yale senator, Arlen Specter, who ended up being accused of political harassment of the Yale professor.

None of this should come as a complete surprise. Yale has often shown a preference for power over substance or morality.

It has long been a popular recruiting market for the CIA. During the 1980s it became a major incubator of virulent yuppiedom,

churning out investment bankers and the lawyers to support their socially unredeeming work.

Yale, after all, is the place where the university's most elite society, Skull & Bones, had a tradition of screening prospects such as George Bush by having them lie nude in a coffin, recounting their complete sexual history in front of other future members of America's establishment. At Yale, power has not only always mattered, it appears to have been linked with sex in a peculiarly exotic (that's an *x*, not an *r*) fashion.

In the Thomas hearings power and sex were similarly commingled, and it was power that united all factions in this dispute.

If George Bush had thought in other terms he would not have nominated a marginally competent political wardheeler in the first place. Even Richard Daley was more careful in his selection of whom he sent to Washington.

If Clarence Thomas had thought in other terms his testimony would have addressed matters beyond an egomaniacal paean to his own character. When the charges arose, he would have, in the interests of the nation, withdrawn, rather than make the country hostage to his self-centered and selfish perception of the priorities of the moment.

If Anita Hill had thought in other terms, she might not have linked her fate so closely and so long with that of man against whom she had such a strong case (one, incidentally, that was never effectively challenged). Anita Hill understood sexual harassment; she did not understand the rape of power.

If Arlen Specter had thought in other terms, he would not have used his minor skills as a prosecutor in such an intellectually dishonest fashion and would not have flagrantly abused his position of senatorial immunity to make wild charges of perjury, delusional disorder and so forth.

Finally, if that absurdist figure in the final act, Texas businessman John Doggett, had thought in other terms, he would have remained in the obscurity he belonged, rather than attempt to seize the moment to advance whatever agenda lurked in his mind. Doggett, who knew little of

Anita Hill, but professed to divine her motivations by facial expression and body movement, was -- like Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now* -- a final parody of everything that had gone before, a symbol of the madness that amoral intellectualism looses upon the world and the damage it does to those who absorb it. As one woman quoted in the *Washington Post* said, Yale has ruined more black minds than crack cocaine.

Of course, there were other sources of foolishness, cruelty and seamy political expediency than Yale University. But nothing encapsulated the affair so well as the distorted values that an unusual number of participants in this tawdry matter seemed to have learned in New Haven.

There were -- although it was hard to notice -- facts in this business, but they increasingly seemed not to matter. Many senators seemed to be asking the witnesses, "Just the speculations, ma'am." Two credible witnesses accused Clarence Thomas of behavior which can fairly be described as sexual harassment. Their stories were not challenged in any factual way. Instead a web of innuendo, hypothesis and pop psycho-analyzing led a number of the committee into ever deeper fantasies in their desperate attempt to defend Clarence Thomas. In the end, the truth didn't interest them at all. It was only a matter of power at any price. Boola, boola, indeed.

The eco-city

New regulations in Mexico City require that every automobile be idle one weekday each week.

The Urban Ecologist reports that Berkeley developer Mickey Tenenbaum is proposing a novel way to add more housing to the city: build on land that is currently used for streets. The idea is to close off one street at a four-way intersection, using the land for a single-housing unit, and creating a cul de sac behind it. Tenenbaum wants the city to donate the land. In return he would sell a quarter of the units to moderate-income families and would sell or rent another quarter as low income housing. One-half of the company's profits would go to the city's low income housing fund.

Light rail continues to prove its usefulness. 60,000 riders a day now take light rail in San Diego. And, after a slow start, Sacramento's starter line is carrying 24,000 a day. The jump came after adding every-train bus connections at five key transfer points. Long Beach and Santa Clara are following suit with new rail lines underway.

Old news

Twenty-one years ago, this journal -- in its previous incarnation as the *DC Gazette* -- ran an article in support of DC statehood, explaining how it could be achieved without a constitutional amendment. The article led a few months later to the creation of the DC statehood movement.

Over the past 21 years, the *New York Times* has thought about the matter and, we're now pleased to report, decided last month that it was a good idea. It ran a lead editorial in support of DC statehood under the banner: "Free the Government's Plantation."

Our award-winning story on the S&L bailout of August 1990 is finally finding echoes in the major prints. *The New York Times* recently ran a front-pager on the fact that the first big sale of seized property has turned "out to be far more generous for buyers and costly to taxpayers than was originally disclosed."

The wonderful world of waste

The media and the public has it wrong. It's not the checks that Congress bounces that are the problem; it's the ones it lets the administration write. Here are some choice examples from the Iraqi Massacre, as provided by the Project on Government Procurement:

» The Air Force has spent bundles on high-priced, high tech planes, but in fact the plane responsible for over half of all Iraqi equipment losses was the cheapest combat aircraft in the Air Force, The A-10.

» In order to keep approximately half of its Apache attack helicopters in the air about a

half hour a day (equivalent to peacetime levels), the Army essentially grounded the other half to have spare parts available.

» The Marines' decades-old M60A1 tanks, which cost less than half as much as the M1, performed admirably, stopping only once a day for fuel and maintenance checks. The gold-plated, high-tech M1, on the other hand, was scheduled for one hour fueling and maintenance once every three to five hours.

» Old planes did just as well against Iraqi defenses as the much-touted Stealth fighter, whose alleged invisibility was pierced by British radar aboard three destroyers up to 40 miles away.

Furthermore...

You hear the construction all the time from public officials, most recently from John Sununu who said of his travel adventures, "Obviously, mistakes were made." Now there are a couple of names for it. *Newsweek* columnist John Leo calls it no-fault syntax. CCN commentator William Schneider calls it the past exonerative.

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